1561

Mass Movements

The Fields that are White unto Harvest

Where They Are

MOVEMENTS of masses of heathen towards Christianity are in full swing in two continents—in the north, south, south-east, west, and centre of India, and in the west, east, and centre of Africa. **All of the mass movement areas are at present within the British Empire.** The various peoples affected are our fellow-subjects. They are claiming the right to be our fellow-Christians also.

Masses and Classes

The masses who are "taking the kingdom of heaven by force" correspond to the "common people" of our Lord's day who "heard Him gladly." They are the horny-handed sons of toil. In India they number SIXTY MILLIONS, one-fifth of the total population, and exert a vast influence upon the life and tone of the villages and towns of that great land; in Africa, so far, about TWENTY MILLIONS are stirring at the sound of the Gospel.

In India they are all outcastes. These often want to come over into the Church in solid blocks, whole villages at a time. They see in Christianity the promise of justice, fair treatment, the right to live their own lives, the opportunity of self-expression, and the power to save to the uttermost. They would find freedom in Christ.

In Africa the movement touches all classes alike. There the "masses" are composed of thousands of individual inquirers, among whom the young men and the chiefs lead the way. African Churches are largely self-supporting.

What They Are Leaving Behind

What are they leaving behind?—1. **Fear.** The religion of the Indian outcaste and the primitive African alike centres in the worship of evil spirits, village deities, and fetishes. It is a religion of superstitious dread.

2. **Degradation and Grinding Poverty.** "Man's inhumanity to man" has marked down the outcaste rather as a brute beast than as a human being. He has been trampled in the mire under the heel of the Hindu caste-people for a thousand

years. The contamination caused by an outcaste's touch is believed to have "the nature of sin," and even to affect the caste-man's next life!

INDIA

At the present time the C.M.S. and the other Protestant missions are baptizing people (chiefly outcastes) at the rate of about 350 converts a day, or over 10,000 a month.

The last census (1911) showed that the increase of Indian Christians during the preceding ten years had been thirty-four per cent. The rate of increase during the last few years has been still more rapid.

During the years 1901-11 one million outcastes were added to the Indian Church, which now has more than four million members.

There are to-day nearly a quarter of a million Indian Christians in the Punjab, where fifteen years ago there were only 35,000. During the ten years before the last census the increase in this province was 400 per cent.

Partly as the result of a mass movement, Christians form a quarter of the entire population of the State of Travancore.

Take a single mass movement area—the

Telugu Country

in south-east India. What are the facts? The work in this C.M.S. Mission has been going on since 1841 in an area of 9000 square miles containing about 6000 villages and hamlets. There are 41,000 Christians connected with the C.M.S., including 9000 persons under instruction with a view to baptism. There are 900 village congregations and 345 schools. In twenty years communicants have quadrupled their numbers. In one district alone during the first eight months of 1917 the number of inquirers enrolled was 2000, some of whom came from twenty villages not previously reached. Desperately poor as the people are, their contributions have increased nearly fivefold in twenty years while the Christian community has trebled.

The key to the problem of this mass movement is the village school, together with the man to use this key, the Indian teacher-evangelist. Hundreds

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of village congregations have as yet neither teacher nor school. Four hundred Christian village communities have so far asked in vain for a resident teacher, and in 515 hamlets where there are C.M.S. congregations there is no school. **The immediate need is for 200 more teacher-evangelists at a cost of £10 each per annum.** More European clerical missionaries are also needed for the work of training, the number having been reduced in eighteen years from seventeen to seven.

"Instead of welcoming new villages of inquirers," a missionary writes, "it has become almost a source of pain to hear of them, for in most cases they have to be disappointed." But for the deep conviction that this movement is the work of the Holy Spirit, and that "God will provide," the hearts of the workers in the field would fail them. Surely the Master calls!

AFRICA

Mass movements are in progress in Nigeria, in most of the regions about Uganda, and in East Africa. These African movements are more recent than those in India, but they promise to become fully as extensive. The advance in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria during the past ten years probably beats all records in the annals of modern missions.

In Uganda there is now a strong missionary African Church, self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. What is the consequence? Uganda is ringed about by mass movements among its heathen neighbours in Kavirondo, Bukedi, Gulu, and Ankole, and there is "a sound of a going" also in the adjoining districts of German East Africa. In the Bukedi Country the number of Christians is now increasing at the rate of about 1000 per annum. At Ng'ora a congregation of 3000 was recently drawn together from the immediate neighbourhood at one day's notice. In Kavirondo there were 5700 readers in 1917.

The place of interest in the missionary world held by Uganda thirty years ago is held to-day by

Nigeria

which is, after India, the most important in area,

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population, and natural resources of all our tropical dependencies. During 1917 there were more than twice as many adult baptisms in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria as in the whole of India and Ceylon.

In 1915 the adherents of the Protestant missionary societies at work in these Provinces numbered 135,748, of whom 88,603 were connected with the C.M.S. In 1917 the Christian community in connexion with the C.M.S. had grown to 105,441. As the C.M.S. total in 1913 was 63,715, it will be seen that the increase during the four following years amounted to sixty-five per cent!

In addition, at least 75,000 scholars were attending the mission schools in 1917, the majority belonging to the C.M.S.; and there were thousands of nominal Christians all over the country with whom the Church had not been able to come into contact.

There is no important region of the mission-field which is so understaffed as Nigeria. **The total number of European clergymen working in the Yoruba and Niger Missions stands at exactly the same figure in 1918 as in 1912.**

Urgency

While the great need in India is for the means to support teachers, and still more teachers, Africa calls aloud for more European missionaries for the work of training and supervision.

God has given a wonderful answer to the prayer "Thy Kingdom come." Crowds are clamouring to enter the Kingdom. **The Church is not ready to receive them.** Failure to cope with the increasing demands for instruction gives rise to the gravest danger. The harvest will spoil, or others (Mohammedans, for instance) will reap. Who will be to blame?

WILL YOU HELP?

You are asked to give as God has blessed you. Will you, either alone or in combination with others, take a "share" in a station in one of these mass movement districts? Each share is £5; one share or more may be taken. Write to the Hon. Sec. of your local C.M.S. Association, or to the Lay Secretary, C.M.S., Salisbury Square, London, E.C. 4.

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